

Message Text

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AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 3963

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, GR

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF GENERAL CONFEDERATION GREED WORKERS (GSEE)
LEADERSHIP

1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND LABOR REPORTING OFFICER CALLED ON PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF GREEK WORKERS (GSEE) ON MAY 28. TWO LEGAL ADVISERS OF GSEE ALSO PRESENT. GSEE PRESIDENT PAPAGEORGIOU EXPRESSED PLEASURE ON BEHALF OF GSEE FOR VISIT OF EMBASSY OFFICIALS AND ADDED HE HOPED THERE WOULD BE FREQUENT CONTACTS AND DISCUSSIONS IN THE FUTURE.

2. PAPAGEORGIOU DESCRIBED THE DIFFICULT SITUATION FACED BY THE GSEE, AND THE LABOR MINISTRY, IN REORGANIZING THE GREEK LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE WAKE OF THE SEVEN-YEAR MILITARY DICTATORSHIP. HE COMMENTED THAT MANY OF THE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE GSEE AND THE LABOR MINISTRY ARE NOW FILLED BY PERSONS WHO WERE ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CLANDESTINE GREEK DEMOCRATIC LABOR MOVEMENT (DEKE) DURING THAT SEVEN-YEAR PERIOD. PAPAGEORGIOU EMPHASIZED THAT IF THE CURRENT DEMOCRATIC LABOR LEADERSHIP FAILS IN ITS TASKS, "IT IS ONLY THE COMMUNISTS WHO WILL PROFIT". THE
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COMMUNISTS, HE SAID, THOUGH A SMALL GROUP, WERE WELL-ORGANIZED

AND ACTIVE AND THUS POSED A THREAT. HE BELIEVED, HOWEVER, THAT THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES WERE IN THE MAJORITY AND WOULD PREVAIL.

3. PAPAGEORGIOU CLAIMED THAT GSEE HAS "GOOD CONTACTS" WITH THE ICFTU WHICH HE EXPECTS WILL HELP THE GREEK LABOR MOVEMENT. HE REMINDED US THAT ICFTU SECRETARY GENERAL OTTO KERSTEN HAD VISITED ATHENS IN AUGUST 1974, SHORTLY AFTER THE RETURN OF DEMOCRACY TO GREECE, AND ANOTHER ICFTU OFFICIAL, AGUIRIANO, HAD COME TO GREECE SUBSEQUENTLY. PAPAGEORGIOU NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT AS YET THE GSEE HAS HAD NO CONTACT WITH ANY AMERICAN TRADE UNION LEADERS OR ORGANIZATIONS. THE GSEE WOULD WARMLY WELCOME THE REESTABLISHMENT OF CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT, HE SAID. HIS COLLEAGUES HAD POINTED OUT THAT, AS WE KNEW, CONSIDERABLE ANTI-AMERICAN FEELING EXISTED IN GREECE AS A RESULT OF THE UNHAPPINESS WITH U.S. POLICY DURING THE JUNTA YEARS AND ESPECIALLY BECAUSE OF CYPRUS. PAPAGEORGIOU ASSURED US THE GSEE WOULD LIKE TO WORK WITH US IN TRYING TO IMPROVE THIS SITUATION, ALTHOUGH IT WAS ALSO POINTED OUT THAT LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENT IN US-GREEK RELATIONS WOULD BE DETERMINED BY THE SETTLEMENT OF THE CYPRUS PROBLEM.

4. PAPAGEORGIOU ALSO NOTED THAT THE FIRST ROUND OF ELECTIONS WITHIN THE LABOR SECTOR, I.E. AT "GRASS ROOTS" UNION LEVEL, WILL BE DELAYED BY A MONTH OR SO. THIS COULD MEAN THAT SUCH ELECTIONS WOULD COME LATE THIS SUMMER. HE EXPLAINED THAT ONE OF THE DELAYING FACTORS WAS THE TIME-CONSUMING PROCEDURE OF APPOINTING SUPERVISORY COMMITTEES TO MONITOR AND CONDUCT THE ELECTIONS FOR EACH OF THE UNIONS.

5. PAPAGEORGIOU INDICATED HE AND HIS OTHER COLLEAGUES PRESENT WOULD BE MEMBERS OF THE GREEK DELEGATION TO THE FORTHCOMING ANNUAL ILO CONFERENCE IN GENEVA (LEAVING ATHENS MAY 31). HE EXPRESSED BOTH THE HOPE AND THE EXPECTATION THAT THE ILO LEADERSHIP WOULD ASSIST THE GREEK DELEGATION TO WIDEN ITS CONTACTS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE IN VIEW OF GREECE'S "ISOLATION" DURING THE SEVEN-YEAR MILITARY RULE. IN THIS CONNECTION HE ALSO HOPED GREEK TRADE UNION LEADERS WOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF MEETING WITH THEIR AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS DURING THE GENEVA MEETING.

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